

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 5998

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TAGS PINT, CO

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. PRES LOPEZ SURPRISED ALL, HEARTENED A GOOD MANY AND DISCOURAGED A FEW WITH HIS THURSDAY EVENING ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NATIONAL STATE OF SIEGE. THE UNEXPECTED MOVE WAS WELCOME NEWS TO THE MIL AND TO THE CONSERVATIVE LOCAL OLIGARCHY (INCLUDING MANY LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS) AS WELL AS TO INFLUENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY--AND PROBABLY TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. THE PRES WILL CLEARLY GAIN SOME SUPPORT FOR WHAT CAN BE VIEWED, IN THE COLOMBIAN CONTEXT, AS A VIGOROUS ASSERTION OF HIS POWERS IN MEETING THREATS TO PUBLIC ORDER. WHILE AS NOTED BELOW A STATE OF SIEGE HAS LITTLE EFFECT ON THE DAILY LIVES OF THE CITIZENRY, ITS INVOCATION BY LOPEZ DOES SIGNAL HIS INTENTION TO TAKE A FIRM HAND WITH THE DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS THAT HAVE, IN RECENT WEEKS, BEEN PROBING THE LIMITS OF HIS TOLERATION. THE LINE HAS NOW BEEN DRAWN. THE INITIAL REACTION TO THE LOPEZ MOVE HAS BEEN FAVORABLE. ASIDE FROM THE EXTREME LEFT, THERE IS NOBODY SPEAKING AGAINST THE USE OF A STATE OF SIEGE. EVEN CARLOS LLERAS EXPRESSED APPROVAL, ALTHOUGH HIS STATEMENT WAS CAST MORE IN THE TONE OF LOYAL OPPOSITION THAN OF SUPPORT FROM A LEADING MEMBER

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OF THE PRES'S PARTY. THE STATE OF SIEGE ANNOUNCED OVERSHADOWED

ALL OTHER EVENTS DURING THE WEEK, SUCH AS THE RESIGNATION OF JUSTICE MIN SANTOFIMIO (BOGOTA 5942) AND EVEN THE REMAINDER OF LOPEZ' JUNE 26 SPEECH WHICH INCLUDED A HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE NATION'S CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE ECONOMY. END SUMMARY

2. STATE OF SIEGE IN COLOMBIA--AGAIN. PRES LOPEZ ANNOUNCED JUNE 26 THE IMPOSITION OF A STATE OF SIEGE THRU-OUT COLOMBIA. THE TIMING OF THE ACTION CAUGHT THE NATION BY SURPRISE. ON JUNE 12, HE HAD DECLARED A STATE OF SIEGE IN THREE DEPTS, ANTIOQUIA, ATLANTICO AND VALLE. AT THAT TIME MANY COLOMBIANS WONDERED WHY HE HAD DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION IN THREE DEPTS ONLY, NOT INCLUDING MAGDALENA WHERE VIOLENCE WAS OCCURRING. THE IMPETUS FOR THE EARLIER STATE OF SIEGE, PRIMARILY SOMEWHAT VIOLENT STUDENT PROTESTS, HAD PASSED. IN EXTENDING THE STATE OF SIEGE THRU-OUT COLOMBIA, THE PRES DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE A CLEAR CUT CASE OF PUB DISORDER, WHICH HE CITED GENERALLY AS THE BASIS FOR THE ACTION. NEVERTHELESS THE PRES'S ACTION PROBABLY WILL PROVIDE A PSYCHOLOGICAL UPLIFT FOR MOST COLOMBIANS, WHO HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE SOCIAL DISORDER IN COLOMBIA DURING THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. MUCH OF THE MIL AND MANY ORDINARY CITIZENS WHO HAVE BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT LAW AND ORDER, INCLUDING GROUPS SUCH AS THE TAXI DRIVERS OF BOGOTA, WHO RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED AGAINST CONDITIONS ON THE STREETS OF THE CAPITAL, HAVE URGED PRES LOPEZ TO TAKE THE NOT UNUSUAL STEP. MOST OF THE PUBLIC WILL NOT BE AFFECTED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER BY THE STATE OF SIEGE. DURING PREVIOUS STATES OF SIEGE, LIFE IN COLOMBIA APPEARED TO CONTINUE AS NORMAL. IN INSTANCES OF CERTAIN CRIMES, HOWEVER THE STATE OF SIEGE PROVIDES THE GOV A MEANS OF TAKING QUICKER ACTION THRU THE MIL COURT SYSTEM THAN IS

ALLOWABLE UNDER THE CIV SYSTEM.

3. CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING. THE RECENT CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING IN PARIS WHERE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AGENCIES AND BILATERAL LENDERS ENDORSED LOAN LEVELS FOR COLOMBIA AVERAGING US\$470 MILLION ANNUALLY HAS BEEN HAILED LOCALLY AS A TRIUMPH FOR THE LOPEZ ADMIN'S ECONOMIC POLICIES. THIS LINE HAS BEEN PLAYED VERY HEAVILY BY THE BOGOTA PRESS. THE PRES IN A SPEECH THE EVENING OF JUNE 26 NOTED THAT THESE LOANS WERE NOT THE SOLUTION TO COLOMBIA'S PROBLEMS BUT RATHER WERE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SUCCESS OF THE GOV'T'S

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EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS THRU THE COUNTRY'S OWN RESOURCES.

4. IN ORDER SECTORS OF HIS ADDRESS LOPEZ PAINTED A FAIRLY ROSY PICTURE OF THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION CITING THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, THE FAVORABLE PROSPECT FOR A NEW COFFEE AGREEMENT, THE OUTLOOK FOR GOLD MINING, AND EASIER CREDIT FACILITIES. THIS RATHER EUPHORIC PRESENTATION GLOSSED OVER SOME FAIRLY TOUGH PROBLEMS, INCLUDING PARTICULARLY COLOMBIA'S DECLINING PETROLEUM

PRODUCTION AND THE GROWING NEED FOR IMPORTS.

5. CARLOS LLERAS TO THE HUSTINGS--MAY DIVIDE LIBERAL PARTY.  
FORMER PRES LLERAS WHO HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS  
IN LIBERAL PARTHFORA TO BRING ABOUT STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN  
THE PARTY AND IN THE ELECTION SYSTEM GEENERALLY, STEPPED UP  
HIS CAMPAIGN DURING THE WEEK. HE TOOK HIS CASE TO THE PUBLIC  
SQUARES IN SANTANDER AND BYACA, WHERE HE HAS A SUBSTANTIAL FOLLOWING.  
IN BARRANCABERMEJA, SANTANDER HE SPOKE LIKE A PRESIDENTIAL CAN-  
DIDATE. BY MID WEEK HE HAD APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT HIS VIEWS WERE  
NOT GETTING A PROPER AIRING IN THE LIBERAL PARTY NATIONAL DIRECTOR-  
ATE AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEND ANY MORE OF THEIR MEETINGS

HIS SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIMARY ELECTIONS AND SEPARATION OF THE CONGRESS-  
IONAL FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WHILE WIDELY DISCUSSED  
AS INTERESTING PROPOSALS RAN INTO TROUBLE WITH CURRENT LIBERAL  
CONGRESSMEN. UNDER THE LLERAS PROPOSALS THEY WOULD HAVE THEIR  
FOUR YEAR TERMS OUT TO THREE IN ORDER TO PUT THE REFORMS IN ACTION  
FOR THE 1978 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. (CONGRESSMEN HAVE BEEEN  
THE LARGEST GROUP IN THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING CONVENTION.  
MOST OF THE LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN ARE BEHOLDEN TO LLERAS' ARCH-  
RIVALJR AMB TO THE US JULIO CESAR TURBAY). LLERAS ANNOUNCED JUNE  
25 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE LLERISTA LIBERAL PARTY HQS,  
FROM WHICH HE SAID HE WOULD CARRY ON HIS FIGHT TO "DEMOCRATIZE  
THE PARTY." SUPPORTERS OF TURBAY WERE QUICK TO LABLE THE LLERAS  
ACTIVITIES

AS DIVISIVE. IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE A TRUMPED UP MOVE,  
TURBAY TOLD EL TIEMPO FROM WASHINGTON BY PHONE THAT HE WAS UNDER  
GREAT PRESSURE TO RETURN TO COLOMBIA TO TAKE ON LLERAS NOW.  
MEMBERS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY MAINTAINED THEIR USUAL SILENCE OVER  
THE LIBERAL PARTY MACHINATIONS, BUT THEIR COLLECTIVE HEARTS  
MUST FEEL A LITTLE LIGHTER. CONSERVATIVES HAVE GENERALLY ADMITTED  
THAT THEIR ONLY CHANCE FOR A VICTORY IN 78 LAY WITH A SPLIT  
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AMONG THE LIBERALS. LLERAS MAY HAVE MOVED IN THAT DIRECTION.

6. GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES. COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES HAD CONFRONTATIONS  
WITH ARMED GUERRILLAS GROUPS IN TWO LOCATIONS DURING THE WEEK.  
ON 20 JUNE, FARC GUERRILLA GROUPS CONTROLLED FOR 20 MINUTES THE  
VILLAGE OF MUTATA IN THE NORTHWEST SECTION OF ANTIOQUIA DEPT.  
THREE PEOPLE WERE KILLED, ONE WAS A MEMBER OF THE POLICE AND ANOTHER  
WAS A CUSTOMS AGENT. SIX INDIVIDUALS WERE KILLED, INCLUDING TWO  
MIL MEN, IN AN ELN AMBUSH OF A ARMY PATROL ON 24 JUNE NEAR THE  
VILLAGE OF MORALES, IN THE DEPT OF BOLIVAR NEAR THE BORDER OF  
SANTANDER DEPT.

7. PRES LOPEZ REPRIMANDS COMMUNIST LABOR CONFEDERATION. THE  
CEMENT WORKERS TRIKE, WHICH ENDED LAST WEEK, REMAINED IN THE  
PUBLIC EYE THIS WEEK, MAINLY THROUGH THE PUBLICATION IN THE PRESS

OF AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION  
CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CSTC) AND ITS AFFILIATES  
AND PRES LOPEZ. IN ITS LETTER, WRITTEN BEFORE THE SETTLEMENT,  
THE CSTC ACCUSED PRES LOPEZ OF PRESIDING OVER ACSADMIN WHICH  
SUPPRESSES THE LAB MOVEMENT AND VIOLATES ITS OWN LABOR LAWS.  
IT ACCUSED THE GOC OF ILLEGALLY CONVOKING THE ARBITRATION TRIBUNALS.  
THE CSTC SAID THAT TRIBUNALS GENERALLY FAOR THE COMPANIES IN  
THEIR SETTLEMENTS. LOPEZ RESPONDED AFTER THE SETTLEMENT, DEPLORING  
THE USE BY THE CSTC OF A STRIKE LASTING FOR OVER 40 DAYS,  
WHICH RESULTED IN SETTLEMENTS IN THE VARIOUS CEMENT PLANTS NO  
BETTER THAN THOSE OBTAINED IN OTHER INDUSTRIES WIHOUT THE USE OF  
STRIKES. LOPEZ SAID THAT THE GOC WASHIGHLY PLEASED THAT THE CSTC  
DID NOT RESORT TO AN ILLEGAL STRIKE, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN DECLARED  
HAD THE LAB ORG CONTINUED THE STRIKE AFTER THE ARBITRATION TRIBUNALS  
WERE CALLED INTO ACTION. IN A VEILED THREAT, THE PRES SAID THAT  
AN ILLEGAL STRIKE WOULD HAVE FORCED THE GOC TO TAKE ACTIONNVGAINST  
THE PROMOTERS OF SUCH AN ACTIVITY. (USUALLY IN SUCH INSTANCES  
THE GOC HAS SUSPENDED THE LEGAL STATUS OF UNIONS.) THE PRES  
ALSO STATED THAT THE GOC WOULD SUBMIT TO THE COURTS FOR A DETER-  
MINATION THE LEJML QUESTION CONCERNING ITS CONVOKING OF THE ARBI-  
TRATION BOARDS. LOPEZ' SPIRITED LETTER DEFENDING HIS GOVT'S  
LABOR POLICY INDICATED THAT HE HAS BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT LABOR  
TURMOIL IN COLOMBIA. AMONG OTHER THINGS, LOPEZ' IMPOSITION OF A  
NATIONWIDE STATE OF SIEGE PUTS THE CSTC ON NOTICE THAT STRIKES  
OF A POLIT NATURE, SUCH AS THE CEMENT STRIKE, WILL NOT BE TOLER-  
ATED ANY LONGER BY THE LOPEZ ADMIN. VAKY  
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## Message Attributes

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